



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO **MANAGER'S REPORT**

DATE ISSUED: February 16, 2001

REPORT NO: 01-034

ATTENTION: Public Safety & Neighborhood Services Committee
Agenda of February 21, 2001

SUBJECT: Fire & Life Safety Services Quarterly Report

SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CITY COUNCIL.

BACKGROUND

For the past several years, Fire & Life Safety Services has presented reports to the Public Safety & Neighborhood Services Committee only as needed related to pertinent issues. This report is responsive to a request from the Committee Chair to provide regular quarterly reports which describe major activities and issues regarding Fire & Life Safety Services.

San Diego Fire & Life Services continues to provide effective, high quality service to San Diego's communities. Response time targets are met consistently, and service is provided skillfully, safely and with utmost courtesy. The ratio of staffing to citizens served is among the lowest in the nation, as are the relative costs of staffing and fire loss. Nevertheless, as reflected in this report, San Diego Fire & Life Safety Services is committed to improving services to our citizens.

Highlights of the preceding quarter are described by Division and Section as follows:

Employee Services

This past quarter, the Health and Human Resources Section implemented three promotion and hiring processes which included Battalion Chief, Fire Captain, Fire Engineer and two Fire Recruit academies. The promotions were created to fill vacancies due to retirements and to fill positions that will be needed when Fire Station 44, located in Mira Mesa, is completed. Promotions included 3 Battalion Chiefs, 17 Captains and 30 Fire Engineers.

During the second quarter of FY 2001, the Training and Education Section graduated 28 Fire Recruits. These recruits completed 14 weeks of rigorous training and preparation prior to assignment to Operations. The first four weeks consisted of academic instruction covering such topics as rescue, equipment operation, fire behavior, fire control measures, wildland fire control, confined space operations and hazardous materials. The manipulative portion is eight weeks and consists of such activities as hose lays, search and rescue, vehicle extrication, rapelling, live fire control, etc. The remainder of the academy training consists of comprehensive testing to ensure that all knowledge and tasks have been mastered by the recruits.

Fire & Hazard Prevention Services

Fire & Hazard Prevention Services provided Fire safety staff support for the San Diego Grand Prix held at the Naval Training Center on November 2 through November 5, 2000. This event involved more than 50,000 participants and spectators.

The Weed Abatement Section developed a plan to use \$50,000 allocated by Council to reduce fire hazards caused by weeds and brush. Weeds and brush will be cleared from City properties by non-profit agencies. The plan involves working closely with other City departments to identify parcels in need of abatement to reduce fire hazards.

Fire Company Inspection Program personnel are participating in a multi-agency effort targeting elder abuse in skilled nursing home facilities. The program named Operation Guardian, conducts surprise on-site inspections of these facilities. Operation Guardian's goals include accountability of the nursing home industry to adhere to regulations governing the safety and welfare of those entrusted to their care.

Communications & Information Services

In October our computer-aided dispatch system went through a major upgrade to the latest version of software with no interruption in service. This was a 90-hour upgrade that was handled behind the scenes and was virtually transparent to citizens and users of the system. The one area where we experienced some difficulty following the upgrade is with our Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) system. We hope to upgrade this system in the near future to improve our overall efficiency.

In early December we began a 90-day beta test for the Palm III in South Bay as a solution to electronically gathering patient information in the field. This information is then downloaded to the hospital for the Quality Assurance net, as well as to our Department for statistical analysis. This program is proving to be very successful, and we anticipate rolling this out job-wide near the end of FY 2001.

Lifeguard Services

New technologies, combined with eased training requirements under California regulations, make it cost-effective to train and equip lifeguards with automatic external defibrillators (AED) used to restore the heartbeats of heart attack victims. Within the year, we intend to provide necessary training to all San Diego Lifeguards, and are actively seeking funding for the devices. This will further enhance the effectiveness of lifeguards in their lifesaving role on City beaches and waterways. Eight new full-time lifeguards were hired in November. They completed five weeks of an intensive lifeguard training academy and began working in January.

For many years the San Diego Lifeguard Service has maintained a dive team composed of lifeguards with advanced underwater dive training, including the use of evidence recovery and the use of Nitrox. This team responds to emergency searches and attempted recoveries of missing persons and property. In some cases, underwater video is used to record the scene for the use of police investigators and the Medical Examiner. Recently the team was involved in the recoveries in two tragic diving accidents at underwater sites off Mission Beach. In each case the recoveries were made the same day of the loss, despite depths of up to 95 feet and visibility as low as 15 feet.

Operations

Staff has developed a final report to Council regarding the financing of Fire & Life Safety Services facility improvements. This item is scheduled for the Docket of February 27, 2001.

The City provided more than 70 personnel along with apparatus and equipment to fight the Viejas Wildfire. Considering the extreme fire conditions, the loss to property was minimal. Of course, the most successful feature of the operation was the safeguarding of human lives. This episode serves as a vivid reminder of the potential for disaster when chaparral vegetation is introduced to a source of ignition, fuel, wind and dry conditions.

San Diego Fire & Life Safety Services continues its efforts to procure a helicopter. Air operations would greatly enhance our ability to protect lives and property. As infill, wildland interface, and traffic snarls continue to evolve, the mobility and versatility offered by helicopters are becoming an essential tool for effective operations. Our focus is on encouraging corporate sponsorship and/or multi-agency funding.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Osby
Fire Chief

Approved: P. Lamont Ewell
Assistant City Manager